

THE Socialist Standard

The Official Organ of **THE SOCIALIST PARTY** of Great Britain.

No. 210. Vol. 18.]

LONDON, FEBRUARY, 1922.

[MONTHLY, TWOPENCE.]

THE COLLAPSE OF CAPITALISM.

There is a notion widely held in certain circles that capitalism is in a state of collapse, or at least, that its collapse is imminent; and this is interpreted to mean that the existing system of society will reach a point at which the production and distribution of commodities will cease, and the whole of the mechanism of Society will fail any longer to operate. Those who propagate this conception naturally accept the view that the tactics of the working class organisation must be framed with this-collapse always in mind.

The illustration given recently by one of them—Mr. Palme Dutt—was the comparison of the present social order to a house admitted to be in a far from perfect condition. Of the occupants there was a section which considered redecoration and repair to be sufficient, while another section thought that nothing less than demolition and building anew would meet the needs of the situation. These sections represent the reformists and revolutionaries respectively. Now, however, the war and the Russian revolution have brought new factors to bear, and the dispute has been removed to another plane, the only question now being not *whether* to destroy, but *how* to rebuild. The house is said, in fact, to have collapsed about the ears of the dwellers through its own rottenness.

This sounds plausible indeed, but argument by analogy is dangerous. Has capitalism collapsed? and to what extent have the war and the Russian revolution altered, apart from having merely intensified, the previous structural defects?

The Third International lays it down that "The present is the period of the breakdown of Capitalism," but does the evidence support this or do the "Third's" adherents act as if it were true? The answer is decidedly no.

In America Max Eastman (Communist) says "This statement is not true of the United States in the same immediate sense that it may be true of Europe. We are not in the period of the breakdown of Capitalism" (*Liberator*, October.) He continues: "We (the American Communists) are employing tactics that could never be appropriate in any other period." Now, the American Communist Party has "gone west," and it is generally agreed that part, if not all, of the cause of their failure, was their attempt to apply a policy based on a condition of affairs which did not exist. Does that support the view that Capitalism is in collapse?

In Canada, which was wildly alleged to be on the verge of revolution at the time of the post-war Winnipeg strikes, a general election has just taken place which has led to the defeat of the conservative party by avowedly capitalist Liberals; the election having been fought on a tariff issue. There has not, apparently, been one Socialist returned.

In Australia, despite its heavy roll of unemployed, and its wage reductions, the "Proletarian" (*Melbourne*, 7th November) writes: "But until the full force of the present world depression reaches our shores the Australian working class will not be very susceptible to Communist propaganda."

In Europe, where the full effect of the

trade depression has been felt, does the economic system show any noticeable lack of vitality, or do the capitalists act in any but their accustomed aggressive manner towards the workers? In spite of the enormous amount of unemployment, curtailment of production, and relative overstocking of markets, are there any strikingly new factors to be considered after one has allowed for the expected after-war depression, the destruction of the war and the blockade, the new political frontiers and the chaos of the exchanges, all of them more or less normal phases of capitalism or the usual experiences after previous wars?

The struggle for markets may have been intensified, but does this call for new revolutionary tactics?

What of the Russian revolution? Here, again, the importance has been overestimated. The re-placing of Czarist feudal Russia by a capitalistic republic, even if the latter remains permanently under the Bolshevik Government, is the net result of the revolution, and it has only loomed so large because of the more or less accidental circumstances that it was the Bolsheviks who were brought into prominence by it.

If capitalism were in collapse would the Bolsheviks be relying on capitalist enterprise to rebuild Russia, a process which they admit will take decades at least? Would our own Communist Party feel the need to ally itself with the Labour Party to get the latter into power? The fact is the capacity of the capitalist system to recover from its depression has been under-rated and the Communists have in practice been forced to discard their theory. From the day when Marx and Engels wrote "There is a spectre haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism," there have continually been people who have under-estimated, as well as others like Hyndman, who never understood, but were always seeing revolution imminent in every momentary pause or set-back in capitalistic development.

In the minds, too, of some of its adherents, this theory of collapse is nothing but a failure to appreciate the Marxian viewpoint. The idea of an actual physical stoppage of production is not Marxian. Societies do not collapse like jerry-built houses. Marx wrote:—"The knell of capitalist private property sounds when the monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, which has

sprung up and flourished along with it, and under it," but as Boudin particularly points out (*Theoretical System of Karl Marx*) "He does not say that production under the old system must become *impossible* before a revolution sets in," and again, "as far as the purely mechanical breakdown of capitalism is concerned . . . it is not a physical breakdown, as would be necessary in order to exclude the necessary intervention of conscious human activity, but rather a moral bankruptcy. Certainly there is absolutely nothing in the capitalist system to prevent it from relapsing into a sort of new feudalism or slavery . . ." (p. 253). What Marx did mean, therefore, by the idea of the breakdown of Capitalism was the working-out of its inherent contradictions plus *recognition* by the workers that the continued existence of a system of society based on their exploitation is unnecessary and intolerable and that the class of exploiters no longer performs useful social functions. The moment of that recognition is the moment of the overthrow of class domination.

But it may be said "Capitalism can no longer employ its wage slaves, nor feed the unemployed." But did it ever? Is unemployment new? and did Capitalism even in its days of most virile expansion and development provide an adequate standard of living for workers, employed or unemployed? Did the capitalists trouble about security for their victims? Everyone knows they did not: and yet the system survived.

It is of no use waiting for the system to collapse, nor preparing a new economic structure to replace it. It will not go until the workers determine that it shall go, and the pressing service revolutionary organisations can perform is to prepare the workers' minds for the possibility of the immediate establishment of Socialism. To return to Palme Dutt's analogy, we have not yet reached the stage of convincing the worker that there is anything wrong with the house at all; he still thinks it is the unneighbourliness of the people upstairs or in the house next door.

H.

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COMMON-SENSE OR SUPER-SENSE.

Some people might argue that there is no such thing as common sense, or sense which is common to everybody, and that, consequently, the term common sense is a misnomer. They are both right and wrong, because two meanings can be read into the term. It is perfectly true that there is no sense common to everyone, but, if we regard the word "common" merely as a synonym for "ordinary" or "common-place" as distinguished from extraordinary, the term at once becomes intelligible, because it is a well-known fact that only a small minority of the people can lay claim to a wide general knowledge. The great majority are more or less ignorant of advanced knowledge and science, and are, therefore, compelled to think and reason on the facts in their immediate environment. The bulk of society are common people and possess only common sense. According to certain apostles of the great man theory, there are in any period of history supermen and men, leaders and followers, intellectual giants who unearth the secrets of nature and publish them to ordinary folk in order that they may know how to live.

The most fitting reply to the apostles of such a creed is to ask them if the "great men" are responsible for the mess in which the human race finds itself to-day. Millions of people all over the world dying of starvation while corn is burnt as fuel and fish is spread over the land as manure. millions of workers forced to starve in idleness because the land and tools required by them to produce the necessities of life for themselves are owned by a small class who will only allow them to be used when profits come to them as a result. In a word, unspeakable poverty in the presence of means and methods that could satisfy every need, could flood the world with a cornucopia of abundance.

It requires very little intelligence, combined with a practical knowledge of modern industrial methods, to see that unemployment, poverty and war are the results of a system of production and distribution based on the class ownership of the means of life, and production for profits; and that a system based on common ownership of the

means of life with associated production for use, would not only abolish these evils but would entirely eliminate the competitive struggle for existence, or supremacy, as we know it under Capitalism.

Notwithstanding the simplicity and correctness of the Socialist position the "supermen," with all their knowledge are nearly always the apologists of the system of starvation and murder. They are with few exceptions to be found on the side of the ruling-class, declaring that the world is all right or that it will right itself if only the common herd will submit quietly to their toil and poverty and not attempt to interfere with the things they do not understand; if they will only consent to be ruled by those who understand the business of ruling, instead of attempting to run or direct things for themselves.

No one could, with truth, deny that many professional men and scientists to-day are as widely separated from the average man in knowledge and intelligence, as the latter is from the savages; yet every scientist who has approached the problem of poverty has failed to see the only solution—Socialism, or has purposely misrepresented it in order to mislead the workers and assist the ruling-class in suppressing it. Spencer wrote profusely on sociology, yet failed to observe facts and tendencies under his very nose. Haeckel, Lodge, Wallace, and many others could see no purpose in civilisation beyond the growing power and glory of the ruling-class and the continued servitude of the toiling millions.

Professor T. H. Huxley, in his essay, "Government: Anarchy or Regimentation," though failing to arrive at a solution, saw much more clearly than most scientists the nature of the poverty problem. He says, for instance: "What profits it to the human Prometheus that he has stolen the fire of heaven to be his servant and that the spirits of the earth and of the air obey him, if the vulture of pauperism is eternally to tear his very vitals and keep him on the brink of destruction?" And again: "No doubt, if out of a thousand men, one holds and can keep all the capital, the rest are bound to serve him or die." And yet again: "Individualism, on the other hand, admitting the inevitability of the struggle, is too apt to try to

persuade us that it is all for our good, as an essential condition of progress to higher things. But this is not necessarily true, the creature that survives a free fight only demonstrates his superior fitness for coping with free fighters—not any other kind of superiority."

But although Huxley saw clearly enough the evils of individualism, or Capitalism, like Spencer, he failed to see the remedy. Socialism, as he understood it, was State ownership, as the I.L.P. preaches it to-day; and he, quite rightly, judged this to be no solution. Where Huxley showed his inability to deal with, or understand social questions, was in attributing poverty to over-population. Obsessed with the Malthusian idea that, without competition and war, the human race would multiply until there was not standing room on the globe, he completely forgot that evolution is just as applicable to social science as physical science or biology. Huxley knew quite well that society had evolved from savagery, under different systems, up to the present. A scientific mind should not assume the end of systems when all social history is a succession of systems, but should endeavour to understand from the outstanding features and tendencies of the present system what forces are being generated by the prevailing conditions. Every system of the past is recognised by its class struggle; feudal barons and serfs, slave owners and slaves, etc.; to-day it is capitalists and wage-slaves. As all ruling-classes in the past have had to give way to the class below, who struggled against them, and as the working-class to-day is engaging ever more keenly in the struggle against the capitalist class, there is little doubt that the latter will share the same fate and that capitalism will give way to a new system more in harmony with the interests of the working-class.

Huxley failed to apply the scientific method, but what was even worse for so brilliant a scientist, he allowed himself to be confused by the Malthusian rubbish which had been exploded almost as soon as it was published by Godwin in his book "On Population," and later by Henry George in "Progress and Poverty."

Moreover, there is no doubt whatever that all the people at present living could, by their own labour, satisfy all their

wants, if it were not for the fact that the ruling class own the land and machinery of production and will not permit them to be used for that purpose, but only to obtain surplus value for themselves. Even if it were true, however, that population would increase beyond the means of subsistence under Socialism, that would be no excuse for prolonging Capitalism with its wage-slavery, unemployment, starvation, war and many other evils. Capitalism is so obviously a system of robbery—robbery of the wealth producers by an idle class—that nothing could justify its continuance once it became generally understood that all these evils were due to the system and would cease to exist under a sane system where profits were no longer the only incentive to production.

It is often said of those who are scientifically trained that they are more easily imposed upon than ordinary folk, and it would almost appear as if years spent in scientific research left the mind simple and childlike towards mundane affairs. This may be the explanation in some cases, but many scientists are on the side of the ruling-class for the same reason as the professional politician and the parson—because it pays.

Whatever the reason, it is quite obvious that the workers must not allow themselves to be confused or guided by them. The evils of Capitalism are quite plain to every man who possesses average common sense. It needs no great scientific knowledge to see that these evils are due to the system; nor does it require super men with giant intellects to tell the workers that they can achieve Socialism by first understanding it and then organising as a class to gain political control.

There is nothing in Socialist principles or objects beyond the comprehension of the average worker; but what there is must be understood by them before they can become organised to establish it.

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JOTTINGS.

Our readers will be deeply grieved, I am sure, to learn that the year that has just ended has been the hardest that the propertied class has ever experienced, at least, so says a writer in the "Manchester Guardian" (6/1/22). It is a most harrowing story. It seems that more old families have parted with their territorial possessions and cut themselves away from places which have been theirs for generations and generations. More heirlooms have been sold, more houses have been deserted, than ever before in the history of the class. Most humiliating of all, champagne is no longer drunk, and they are obliged to fall back on the humble whisky and soda. I cannot verify this at the moment—none of the things they have renounced have come my way, therefore I must be content to shed a tear. Poor devils!

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And yet in the very same column in which this distressful state of affairs is described, we are regaled with an account of the costly New Year celebrations at the London hotels and restaurants, the lavish expenditure on set scenes and gifts for the guests. At one hotel alone 6,000 crackers were distributed to the guests. And they weren't penny ones, either! Other accounts elsewhere described the carnivals as being the rendezvous of the most elite of London society. Beautiful scenery, orchestras playing glorious music, lovely ladies with dresses and jewels costing thousands of pounds, plenty of cigars, booze and—oh! what's the use!

But before I leave the subject, perhaps I ought to mention, by way of contrast, that in one district alone—Poplar—10,000 very poor children were provided with a dinner by means of charity. The fact that this number of working-class children, in one district alone, could be found who were in need of something to eat, while at the other end of the town thousands of idlers were gorging themselves to death, forms a very striking commentary, indeed.

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At the time of writing there is some talk of postponing the General Election which was forecasted for February. Most

political parties are preparing for the fray. The Right Hon. J. M. Robertson has written a pamphlet in the cause of the true Liberals. He calls it "Liberalism and Labour," and makes the bold claim that Liberalism "has wrought for Britain an ever-increasing liberty of life with an ever advancing betterment." Yes, we've noticed it! "It has steadily and successfully aimed at the betterment of the life conditions of the mass." Maybe. They might have aimed at it, but they have certainly missed it, for they are notoriously bad shots. Lloyd George!

The Labour Party in particular is sanguine of success. They expect to run about 400 candidates in the hope of realising their ambition—a Labour Parliament. No programme has been decided on as yet. But judging by the pronouncements made already it will differ in no respect from that of the Liberals. Ireland, reconstruction in Europe, substantial and progressive disarmament, recognition of Germany and Russia—all these non-working class issues will be the main planks in the programme.

Workers have suffered untold miseries under capitalist domination; under a Labour Government they will continue. One can easily imagine the capitalists, in order to ease their own responsibilities, handing over the reins of government to the Labour Party with their best wishes for success. We have seen what has happened under "Labour's rule" in Australia. Capitalism in this country has little to fear from the present form of industrial and political organisation of labour. Since their own existence as a class is not seriously threatened, they could rest assured that the Labour Party would do its best to clean up the rotten mess which between them they have made.

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Proof of this was given by Mr. Clynes himself when speaking at a Labour Conference at Plymouth on December 10 last. He said that the Government, since the end of the war, had stumbled from one economic blunder to another, until now six or seven millions were existing under conditions of acute distress on the labour of other people instead of being at work and living on the results of their own labour. The bluff in this will be seen where he tries to make it

appear that those who are out of work are living on those who are in work. Government doles and allowances and the like, are paid out of the surplus value possessed by the capitalists; what the workers get in the form of wages represents their cost of subsistence.

Beyond that they have nothing to pay with. If the capitalists are obliged to feed their surplus slaves it is the fault of their own system. The implication in Clynes' statement is that if all those who at present are unemployed were found work, those who are now at work would be better off by as much as it is costing to keep alive those who are out of work. This is not true.

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Again: "If political relations with any other country will limit our freedom for economic recovery, freedom must be secured to avoid economic ruin. By separate action, or better still, by international conference and co-operation" (i.e., of capital and labour!) "we should speedily diminish the appalling list of our unemployed. Business men and financiers now see that they must take some step to solve this question, or it will submerge them in the privations which others now endure."

You see the drift! Worrying about what *might* happen to the capitalists if they don't get busy and squeeze the worker some more!

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It has been complained that the Labour Party never made Socialism the issue at an election. That's true. It would be absurd to expect it. After what has been said it will be obvious that we have some justification for saying that the Labour Party is saturated with capitalist notions.

Permit me to inflict Clynes on you once more:—"The share of Labour in providing a remedy would be in increasing the national products by greater output, so as to reach those lower prices which are a guarantee for effective competition. A demand for output should, however, be preceded by a foreign and home policy which would not destroy markets, but make them certain, and output should be preached together with the doctrine that men doing

their best shall not thereby incur the penalty of unemployment, and shall have their fair share of the increased product from increased energy." Could anything be plainer than that?

Increased production so as to reach lower prices! Lower prices, in the present condition of the labour market, mean lower wages; in some cases to below the subsistence point.

Greater output means intenser exploitation. "There is imminent in capital an inclination and constant tendency to heighten the productiveness of labour, in order to cheapen commodities, and by such cheapening, to cheapen the labourer himself" ("Capital," p. 309). It is being proved every day. Only recently a Sheffield inventor was reported to have sold to a well-known Birmingham concern for £5,000 a mass output machine which produces at 7d. per pair scissors which to-day cost Sheffield makers 3s. 6d. It is claimed that the machine, operated by one man and a boy, does the work of ten men employed on former processes.

This is what Clynes is in reality advocating, whether he realises its significance or not. And who will determine when a man is "doing his best" and what constitutes the "fair share" of the increased product from increased energy?

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If we are to believe reports from Russia, the conditions in some of the outlying districts must be terrible indeed. According to correspondents who claim to have witnessed the sufferings of the people, peasants have been reduced to the necessity of eating their horses, dogs and cats, out of sheer starvation. Even rats have been utilised as food. Whether our "smart society," ever on the look-out for stunts, regards this as a novelty worthy of emulation, or not, I am unable to say. Anyway, they have made a start. We read that frogs and snails have been put on the bill of fare at one of the leading London hotels.

I looked again, thinking it might have been advanced as a measure of economy. But no—the explanation is that English and American officers have acquired a taste for them while serving in France (where others acquired a taste for something else) and are anxious to have them again.

There is no doubt that what one class would only resort to out of necessity, another class will adopt because it is "daring" and "quite the thing, you know."

But seemingly it has another aspect. According to the "Manchester Guardian" (13/1/22) "the tremendous commercial fact is that 250 frogs and 200 snails are now being brought to London daily by air from Paris." What is more, the daily order is going to be doubled because the idea has caught on. No expense will be spared so that they shall live like storks. Anything, I suppose, to relieve the monotony of a satiated useless existence. And these are our rulers—our decadent ruling class!

TOM SALA.

A STRIKING COINCIDENCE.

Although written by a man who lived too early to have studied Marx (and who, in addition, stated he was no economist, and merely wished to learn from the public men of his day) the following analysis of the causes of the misery following upon the close of the Napoleonic wars is as applicable in its main points to-day as when written over a hundred years ago:

"I said the cause of this apparently unaccountable distress seemed to me to be the new extraordinary changes which had occurred during so long a war, when men and materials had been for a quarter of a century in such urgent demand, to support the waste of our armies and navies upon so extensive a scale for so long a period. All things had attained to war prices, and these had been so long maintained, that they appeared to the present generation the natural state of business and public affairs. The want of hands and materials, with the lavish expenditure, created a demand for and gave great encouragement to new mechanical inventions and chemical discoveries, to supersede manual labour in supplying the materials required for warlike purposes, and these, direct and indirect, were innumerable. The war was a great and most extravagant customer to farmers, manufacturers, and other producers of wealth, and many during this period became very wealthy. The expenditure of the last year of the war for this country alone was one hundred and thirty millions sterling, or an excess of

eighty millions of pounds sterling over the peace expenditure. And on the day on which peace was signed, this great customer of the producers died, and prices fell as the demand diminished, until the prime cost of the articles required for war could not be obtained. The barns and farmyards were full, warehouses loaded, and such was our artificial state of society that this very superabundance of wealth was the sole cause of the existing distress. Burn the stock in the farmyards and warehouses, and prosperity would immediately recommence in the same manner as if the war had continued. This want of demand at remunerating prices compelled the master producers to consider what they could do to diminish the amount of their productions and the cost of producing until these surplus stocks could be taken off the market. To effect these results, every economy in producing was resorted to, and men, being more expensive machines for producing than mechanical and chemical inventions and discoveries, so extensively brought into action during the war, the men were discharged, and the machines were made to supersede them, while the numbers unemployed were increased by the discharge of men from the Army and Navy.

Hence the great distress for want of work among all classes whose labour was so much in demand while the war continued. This increase of mechanical and chemical power was continually diminishing the demand for and value of manual labour, and would continue to do so, and would effect great changes throughout society. For the new power created by these new inventions and discoveries was already enormous, and was superseding manual power."—Robert Owen (page 171, "Life of Robert Owen," Bohn's Popular Library.)

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The Socialist Standard,

SATURDAY



FEB. 4, 1922

HOPE SPRINGS INFERNAL IN THE WORKER'S BREAST.

The present and future outlook of the working class is extremely gloomy—as gloomy as the murky London fog outside the writer's window this Sunday afternoon.

Prices are still in cloudland, whilst wages are falling rapidly. Unemployment engulfs a vast mass of the working class, whilst the movement for increased production (which in effect means both a lowering of wages and a lowering in the number of wage receivers) promises to further increase the workless army.

One country after another has reached the point where it can tackle its own market and compete in foreign markets. The economic signs and portents point to increasing difficulties and increasing misery for the workers of this country. England is no longer the predominant manufacturing and transportation country. In any case, so much have the one time backward countries developed that the predominance of one of them would help such a one but little. The "Good Old Times" have fled, never to return.

Backward countries have stepped into the van of production and can meet, to a great extent, their own requirements; this limits the available world's markets. But

such countries also step in as competitors in foreign markets; this further curtails the available markets. This all-round competition intensifies the struggle for markets and brings about a greater concentration upon the question of lowering the cost of production of articles.

Looking at the matter casually, to-day it would appear that the main objective of the capitalists is increased production. A closer examination of the matter will easily dispose of this false idea.

What are the elements required in order to produce wealth to-day? Raw material, machinery, and labour-power of various degrees of skill. Is there any shortage of raw material? The earth is teeming with raw material, and the untapped resources are as relatively unlimited as the development of human ingenuity. Is there a shortage of machinery? There are numerous first-class manufactories of all classes of machinery working short time for want of orders to execute. Is there a shortage of labour-power? The hundreds of thousands of unemployed of all degrees of skill searching anxiously, and so often unavailingly, for work can provide a complete answer to this question. Finally, the slowing down of production owing to overstocked markets is the overwhelming contradiction to the claims of the increased productionists.

The mere increase of production is not the objective of the capitalist; his main objective is the lowering of the cost of production. This point merits a little examination.

The cost of production of an article is determined by the amount of labour-power required, under certain definite conditions, to produce (to be more accurate—reproduce) it. Labour-power itself is subject to the same condition, under capitalism. The worker receives, as a rule, the equivalent of his cost of production, but not the equivalent of what he produces. The difference between what the worker receives and what he produces is surplus value—or that portion of the value of an article which the worker produces for nothing.

The capitalist in competing for markets endeavours to undersell competitors by reducing the labour time spent upon articles to a minimum (reducing the value of an article) and at the same time to obtain the maximum of surplus value by increasing the difference between what the worker receives

and what he produces—increasing the amount of wealth a worker can produce and reducing the amount he receives. In other words, increasing the exploitation of the worker.

The wealth the capitalist waxes fat upon comes out of surplus value, hence what the capitalist is after is not the supplying of the world with as great a multitude and variety of goods as possible, but the expansion of surplus value to the greatest possible extent. That he appears to do the former is not due to his philanthropy or good intentions, but because of his thirst for surplus value.

The capitalist is out to relieve the workers as much as possible of the burden of producing (not by shouldering it himself!). This is a very laudable object—very laudable indeed—but unfortunately it is only by shouldering the burden of producing that the worker can get his living under capitalism. Consequently by reducing the cost of production the capitalist relieves more and more workers of the burden of producing, the unemployed army grows, and in due time the graves get more and more burdens. Of course this increases employment in the coffin trade—perhaps this is the real meaning of “increased production”?

We are continually reading the inky wails of the English capitalists over the loss of trade, and the reason they put forward as causing this loss is the alleged relatively high working costs, endeavouring to impress upon us that high working costs are due to relatively high wages. We have seen above the idea lying behind their agitation, but there is another counter to their move, and that is this: The capitalists in every advanced country in the world are putting exactly the same position to their particular workers—they can't all be right! Unfortunately, however, the argument, backed up by “trusted labour leaders,” serves its purpose to some extent. The workers give credence to this view and submit to wage reductions in a more or less docile manner.

In view of the obvious facts above mentioned in relation to the increase in unemployment, it is remarkable to find what a considerable number of workers base their hopes upon an improvement in their industrial outlook. They accept, without exami-

nation, the contention that they are suffering one of the usual periods of “bad times” which will shortly blow over and work will become plentiful. They forget that with the development of capitalism the “bad times” period has tended more and more to become the normal position; the intensified production spur applied during the war exaggerated the position beyond the normal growth.

So satisfactory, from the outlook of the capitalist, is the present attitude of the workers that a leading capitalist paper can say:

“The patience which in these circumstances, the masses of unemployed have maintained in the face of hardship and official apathy, is remarkable enough to have excited the astonishment of visitors from abroad as well as writers in other countries” (*Daily News*, 13/10/21).

And the Communist, the closet philosophers (!) have the blindness or the brazen impudence to assert that this country is on the verge of revolution!

Hope may “spring eternal in the human breast,” but when directed into certain channels it is not only as delusive as the desert mirage, but it is also apt to bring harmful results—in the case in question the hope of “Better Times” breeds the attitude of political apathy.

Outside of Socialism there are no “Better Times” ahead for the working class. Consequently the workers must abandon their present apathetic attitude and take a lively interest in their present social position—they must study Socialism and find out what it means to them.

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CAPITALISM IN EAST AFRICA.

(continued.)

Some, at least, of the natives are beginning to have other ideas. Native associations with a strong political bias already exist, and have, during the past year, been steadily attracting attention by open propaganda.

On June 24th representatives of the Kikuyu Association met the Chief Native Commissioner and his underling, the Senior Commissioner of the Kyambu District (the heart of the coffee area). Through the instrumentality of certain missionaries (obviously desirous of keeping native movements in "constitutional" lines), they laid before these officials a memorandum of grievances under ten heads, which are worth quoting in detail.

(1) The Tribal Retainers were charged with conscripting young females (married and single) for labour on European plantations by coercing the chiefs, parents, or husbands, as the case might be, with fines and imprisonment. (Tribal Retainers are native police agents of the Government operating in the tribal reserves.) It was pointed out that this practice led to wholesale degradation of the girls and young women at the hands of overseers, etc., on the plantations. Specific instances were given, but, of course, the Government Officers could not be expected to know anything about them officially, although they are the logical outcome of measures such as the Labour Ordinance.

(2) It was charged against the Administration that Chiefs and Headmen were arbitrarily arrested and imprisoned without the "Kiama" (native council of elders) being informed of any charge of offence against them.

(3) Charges of corruption, extortion, rape, etc., were proffered against the Chief Tribal Retainer, and supported by numerous concrete instances.

(4) Complaint was made that, in spite of Government's promises to issue title deeds to the natives for the land held, occupied, and cultivated by them, encroachments of a piecemeal character upon such land are continually occurring.

(5) The delegation protested against the registration system. The registration certificate of each native employee must be signed by his employer before he may leave

the latter's service. An employer who wishes to retain natives who may wish to leave him can simply refuse to sign their certificates.* By leaving under such circumstances the employees render themselves open to *prosecution for desertion*.

(6) It was pointed out that the heavy increase in taxation, coupled with the reduction of wages, was very oppressive.

(7) The Government were pointedly reminded that they promised the natives "rewards" for their services during the war. Was the policy above outlined to be considered as the reward?

(8) Free access to the forests (of which the natives have been deprived by law) was demanded. "We now have to buy the firewood and trees (for building) which once were ours."

(9) The arbitrary manner in which "the Europeans"—i.e., the settlers and the Government discussed and adopted measures vitally affecting native interests—was strongly condemned, and a demand was made for what is virtually *political representation*.

(10) Finally, the delegation made it clear that they were not satisfied simply to work and pay taxes, and claimed *universal education* for their children at Government expense!

To the critical wage-slave of Europe the above expression of native thought may not appear very revolutionary. The evils described are essentially similar to those which he has become accustomed to regard as inseparable from the social order under which he exists; while the demands in the final clauses can hardly affect that order in a fundamental manner in Africa, seeing that they have not done so in Europe. Yet to the local master class these demands appear as drastic as did Chartism to their early Victorian prototypes, and any independent effort of the natives to realise them will be fought and, if possible, crushed.

It is here that the importance of the political struggle of the Indian bourgeoisie becomes manifest. That they will use (already are using) the discontent of the native peasantry and the ever-growing proletariat as a lever to achieve their aims is only to be expected by those possessed of historical knowledge. It is just as certain that the sympathy of the Asiatic

*NOTE.—These Certificates bear (among other particulars) the native's thumb-print.

leaders for the natives will evaporate as rapidly as their own objects are conceded, i.e., equality for capitalists irrespective of colour! But the ghost of democracy once raised is not so easily laid. Two parties can play the demagogues game. If, as seems likely, the white settlers also adopt the weapon of popular agitation, then the natives may reap from the quarrel of their rival exploiters the concession of formal political power. By bringing them into line with other slaves this will make them more accessible to real revolutionary propaganda. It is the fear of this ultimate result of the Indian agitation that is at the back of the settlers' minds, and adds intensity to their resistance. They feel quite capable of dealing with the natives so long as the latter are isolated, but once let the natives obtain an inkling of the forces at work in the outside world and the settlers may well tremble for the safety of their privileges.

This is typical bourgeois blindness. As Marx has it:—"The progress of social disintegration will take a form more brutal or more humane, according to the degree of development of the working class itself" (Preface to "Capital," 1st Edn.). Native discontent in Africa will only take on a more violent and reckless character the more it is debarred from scientific enlightenment; but it is hardly surprising that the intellectual paralysis of the capitalist class should extend itself to their representatives in the tropics. Only from the working class is the native likely to receive aid in developing in a full and free manner both himself and his natural heritage, and it is the writer's purpose to show that the workers have a direct interest in that development, or, to be more precise, will have, so soon as they emancipate themselves from capitalist control.

Before the rise of Capitalism in Europe the workers found almost within the bounds of their villages (or at most their counties) the means of satisfying most of their wants. To be sure they might (when in a position to do so) enjoy the luxuries produced by foreign lands; but to the workers to-day the outside world is not primarily a source of luxury. It is an indispensable necessity. Elements from every longitude and latitude enter into the environment of even the wage-slaves, and

it is this fact which inspires the Socialist slogan, "The World for the Workers!"

In order to find raw material for its ever-expanding industry and even food for its increasing army of industrial labour-power, Capitalism has annihilated geographical and racial boundaries and enslaved to some degree the mass of practically every people on earth. It has turned Asia, Africa, Australia, and South America into agricultural and mining districts of North America and Europe. It has destroyed such degree of domestic industry as existed in these continents and thus made them dependent on Capitalism for finished commodities; thus providing itself with the indispensable condition of its own growth—an expanding world-market.

The workers have suffered most from every crisis through which Capitalism has passed. They are suffering most now. It is upon them, therefore, that the world-problem presses most relentlessly for solution. That solution can be found only in the abolition of capitalist ownership of the means of life and production for profit. A system in which the producers have social utility as their object, in which, therefore, every pair of hands, every brain, every available material resource is welcome, nay, necessary—only such a system, based on common ownership of the world, common rights and common duties, can solve the problem. The African problem, the Indian problem (and the Irish problem) are all aspects of the whole; they will find their solution—can find no other solution than—in the world solution. The workers of Europe and America will find in the slaves of Asia and Africa allies in the struggle against Capitalism, but being the industrial proletariat they must take the lead. Their superior historical experience and technical resources must provide the means to guide and train willing but inarticulate helpers in the task of revolutionary reconstruction. A world-wide propaganda, coupled with every possible material assistance, must supersede the political control of the master-class.

Only thus can the workers make the most of the world and their own inherited mechanical and intellectual powers. The emancipation of the working-class involves the emancipation of all mankind!

E. B.

MORE "CHEAP AND NASTY."

In the "Fortnightly Review" for November appears an article entitled "Unemployment—its cause and its only remedy." The alluring title might lead the unsuspecting to anticipate something in the nature of a new remedy, but upon a little examination, we find it is simply the old speeding up trick of increased production. Every mouthpiece of capital, be it Clynes on the stump, Lloyd George at the Guildhall Banquet, or even a capitalist apologist prostituting his pen in a four shilling periodical, each in their turn have denounced the workers and attempted to show that theirs is the responsibility for the present universal chaos. The writer of the above article, Ellis J. Barker, says: "Industrial unemployment is world-wide, and it is due principally to the unreasonableness of labour" (p. 870). "It is by far the greatest in England and the United States, in both countries industry has almost come to a standstill owing to the vast accumulation of manufactured goods which fill the warehouses and cannot be sold" (p. 869). This condition of world-wide super-abundance of goods co-existent with millions of workless men and women, is, we claim, the logical outcome of capitalist production, its effects are as wide as the system itself. Just so long as production is primarily for the world's markets with the object of profit, just so long must this absurdity, want amidst an overflowing supply of man's requirements, persist. Many generations have passed away since man's power over nature made slavery possible, that condition came into existence as soon as his product exceeded his individual needs. A meagre subsistence that barely sufficed for the needs of all, made idlers and thus slavery impossible. But to-day mankind has inherited all the age long discoveries and inventions that have culminated in the vast social productive powers of modern machine industry, which in comparison to all previous methods of wealth production, appear as mere button pressing. Only a class ignorant of its own importance could operate and wield such forces, merely to live in want, wretchedness and degradation. And yet out of these conditions will arise the knowledge that will lead to the eventual determination to end this sordid existence and in its place establish

a system of society that will mean life in the fullest sense. Writers of the type of Ellis J. Barker pretend to be innocent of the nature of capitalist exploitation. They ignore causes and pretend that symptoms are only passing inconveniences that will fade away if only the workers will work harder and be more sweetly reasonable. He says: "There is a superabundance of work for all. The world has never been in more urgent need for goods of every kind" (p. 877). One would naturally ask why there are any unemployed, or why the goods "which fill the warehouses and cannot be sold." We have already answered these questions, when we pointed out that production is only carried on for sale; when that sale is impossible then the workers remain idle and in want. The wages they receive represent but a fraction of the total values they produce, and no matter how cheaply they produce, or how cheaply they live, they cannot buy back more than that portion equal in value to their wages which represent only a part of their output. Even the luxurious living of the idle class can only account for a portion of this surplus, still leaving an enormous quantity of wealth seeking a market. Newly developed countries like Japan mean lost customers and new competitors for these markets. It isn't by any wish of the capitalist that he groans under the depressing atmosphere of prolonged crises that apparently refuse to clear away. Unemployment is a necessity of capitalism at any time, both for the lowering of wages and to ensure as far as possible the continued docility and forbearance of its wage slaves. It exists where increased production has taken place; it exists where low wages are paid, and where a relatively higher wage operates; it is as much an institution of capitalism as poverty, prostitution, or the Nonconformist conscience. Only when the working-class understand the cause of unemployment and all the other vicious conditions which beset the workers' existence; understand that the cause is capitalism itself can they harmonise social production with social ownership by the abolition of the private ownership of the means of life, and the establishment of the social ownership. This will bring the ownership of wealth in line with the social methods of production of to-day, whose benefits at present accrue only to the

privileged few. Then only will such powers of wealth production beneficially serve the whole of society and bring happiness and plenty to all.

MAC.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Sirs,—In the S.S. for December, 1921, at the foot of page 51, Mr. Tom Sala quotes—apparently with disapproval—the statement—

“Matter as now viewed by science is something as little materialistic in the old sense as could be well imagined”

and, on page 54 is an article by “S.” entitled “Ghosts.”

I have never been able to understand why readers of the S.S. have uninformed stuff of this sort occasionally flung at their heads, seeing that the proletariat is wholly indifferent to philosophy, advanced physics or psychic science.

However, as space is allotted in your journal to these topics, may I ask Mr. Sala one or two questions?

- (1) What is “matter” as distinct from force?
- (2) How can “matter” (as distinct from force) effect sensation in us, and so apprise us of its existence?

Yours faithfully,

GEO. T. FOSTER.

Reply.

Comrades,—Mr. Foster appears to have missed the point of my comment. My reason for quoting and commenting on the observation was to show that in the field of science, as anywhere else, the workers were being bluffed. Hence, as a Socialist, my disapproval.

The term “materialistic” in the quotation given was used by its author deprecatingly, suggesting that materialism in the “old sense” (meaning that of Spencer, Haeckel, Büchner, etc.) had had its day and that the metaphysicians had now something to say. Taken with its context, where it went on to say that “true science did not seek to deprive man of his soul, or to drive the Creator from His Universe,” its meaning should have been obvious.

Conceptions of matter may have changed, but no scientist, with any regard

for the facts, can say that matter is any less materialistic than it ever was. Admitting that the old views of matter required modification, to say that matter as now viewed by science is less materialistic, and that it can find a place for God and the soul, is both unscientific and misleading.

If I understand Mr. Foster to mean that these things are of no importance to the cause of the workers, then I venture to disagree with him. If, also, he means that there are subjects which are outside the interests of the proletariat, and to which it would be futile to give them access, again I disagree. It may be true that they are indifferent to scientific subjects; but don't we find, as teachers of Socialism, that they are not only indifferent to our teaching, but are indifferent to their own poverty! But that does not mean we should abandon the task, surely! Mr. Foster's gibe suggests that I did wrong in selecting the statement quoted for comment. Assuming I am “uninformed,” he thereupon proceeds to test my knowledge by submitting the following questions:—

- (1) What is “matter” as distinct from force?

Ans.: I don't know. If by “force” is meant energy (since “force” has no physical existence), then matter as distinct from energy (or “force”) is an unthinkable proposition. I am aware that these are spoken of as “entities,” yet we are told that each is known only in its relation to the other. We may know something of the constituents or properties of matter, but as to what matter itself is—does anyone know?

- (2) How can “matter” (as distinct from force) effect sensation in us, and so apprise us of its existence?

Ans.: This starts with the same proposition as No. 1. It is, therefore, covered by the answer to No. 1. Perhaps some person less “uninformed” than myself would like to get busy on this.

After all, the Editor's space is limited, if the Universe isn't.

Yours fraternally,

TOM SALA.

Dear Sir,—Referring to the allusion on page 63 of the *SOCIALIST STANDARD* "to the "Crusader," will you allow me to say that Mr. Wellock, who is quoted, no longer contributes to the "Crusader," and that his withdrawal from our regular staff was due to differences on the very points raised by your contributor. The charge of inconsistency therefore fails. There is an article in our current issue in which our standpoint is made clear. Referring to a book by Maurice L. Rowntree on Social Freedom, our reviewer says:—

"It is unfortunate, too, that once more the impressions should be given that the Social Message of Christianity rests ultimately on the teaching of Jesus instead of on the basic facts of revelation—i.e., the incarnation, sacrifice, and resurrection of Christ. When St. Paul wished to impress on his readers the need of cultivating the spirit of service he did not refer to the teaching of Jesus but to the fact that He Who was equal with God "humbled Himself and became obedient unto death." For those who regard Jesus only as a supreme prophet, Mr. Rowntree's method may seem satisfactory, but for those who hold the Christian Faith nothing less than that Faith will serve as a sufficient foundation and guide for their social programme."

It may interest your readers that Conrad Noel, Vicar of Thaxted, is now contributing to the "Crusader" his "People's Life of Jesus."

Yours sincerely,
STANLEY B. JAMES.

Mr. James states that Wilfred Wellock, from whom I quoted, has left the "Crusader." I wrote, however, at the end of September, more than a month, I believe, before Wellock left.

I had not made a specific charge of inconsistency, but I will certainly make it now. It is inconsistent to have conflicting opinions published side by side without one or the other being accepted as an official view.

It does not seem to me that the "Personal Divinity of Christ" touches on the question of the emancipation of the working class, but the offering of Christian slave ethics to a subject class whose end can be achieved only through a bitter struggle, does touch on it—dangerously.

Incidentally, there is in a recent issue a repetition of this idea. "Christians . . . could become helpful critics of the trade unions. Were they alive to the ultimate and deathless realities of love, justice an equality, they would bring alert criticism from inside when material questions of wages were obscuring the spiritual question of revolution." (30th December, 1921).

The question of revolution is not a spiritual one. Its means is the wresting of political control from the Capitalist class, and its object the freeing of the workers from economic subjection. It will be met with hatred, and has nothing to do with abstract justice. The expropriation of private property will in fact be, for the present owners, a most unjust proceeding. Capitalist equality, that is, the equality before the law, of Capitalists in the exploitation of the workers, is desirable—for the exploiters. Might not right well prevail against them. H.

POCKET AND PRINCIPLE.

"Beware of all other classes."—"No matter whom it shuts out, go through with, it—make them line up with the worker . . . or else shut the door on them." . . . "If a man is a member of the B.S.P., the S.P.G.B., the Herald League, the Salvation Army, the Anarchists, no matter what organisation or group, if his income is more than £5 weekly . . . he is not a member of your class." (E. T. Whitehead, the "Spur," June, 1920.)

Whitehead did not explain who were "all the other classes." He also did not attempt to support this weird idea of his by evidence, but palmed it off on poor old Marx. The sequel, however, is amusing.

Since those days Edgar appears to have prospered. He is now the employee of the Communist Party, that curious compound of the "B.S.P., the Herald League, the Salvation Army," etc., etc. He has also passed the £5 line, which for him parts the sheep from the goats. "Change the manner of getting the living . . . from working to cadging . . . the ideas change at once." ("Spur," as above.)

Are Whitehead's words to be applied to himself, and is this the reason why our wartime pacifist is now a full-blooded Bolshevik?

The "Herald" completes the chapter. A New York report in the issue for 14th January, 1922, reads as follows:—

"Edgar T. Whitehead . . . the representative of the Communist Party of Great Britain on the Workers' International Famine Relief Committee . . . arrived as a *first class* passenger aboard the "Baltic." (Italics mine.)

R. BIRD.

THE COAL MINER AND HIS UNION.

We remember a glowing eulogy of Frank Hodges appearing in the daily Press at the time of the coal strike, 1920.

An immediate reason for "pointing him out" arises from the following statement he is reported to have made ("Daily News," 14/1/22) on the miners' plight and low wages.

"Those who are working, are working with unprecedented energy, but the pithead prices secured for the coal does not warrant either a decent wage for the workmen, nor anything like *a fair measure of profit to the owners*; although the industrial consumer and the domestic consumer are still having to pay fabulously high prices for the coal after it has passed through the hands of merchants, factors, and retail dealers."

Why should Hodges be concerned about "a fair measure of profit to the owner"? What are profits? They represent a portion of surplus value, unpaid labour time.

The workers are poor because they are robbed of this surplus value. The workers receive back only a relatively small proportion of the values they produce. They are paid wages on the subsistence level, the sliding scale system. The worker has but his power to labour, which, in order to live he is compelled to offer for the best terms he can obtain.

His labour power is a commodity, and like every other commodity, its price is determined, in the main, by its cost of production, the price fluctuating through the operations of supply and demand. Therefore, the cost of purchasing the necessities of life—food, clothing, and shelter—determines as a rule the amount of wages which the worker receives from time to time.

Now Hodges knows that the wages system spells misery to the worker and he clouds the situation with his talk of "decent wages" and "a fair measure of profit."

O.C.I.

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SOCIALIST PARTY of Great Britain

BRANCH DIRECTORY.

BATTERSEA.—Communications to A. Jones, 3 Mathew-st., Letchmere Estate, Battersea, S.W. Branch meets Mondays, 8.30, at 16 Creek-st., York-rd.

BIRMINGHAM.—Communications to L. Vinetsky, 11 Upper Dean-st., Birmingham. Branch meets A.E.U. Institute, Spiceal-st., every Saturday.

CENTRAL.—Membership obtained only through the Ex. Committee. Applications to General Sec.

EAST LONDON.—Communications to A. Jacobs, Sec., 78 Eric-st., Mile-end, E.3. Branch meets first and third Mondays in month at 141 Bow-rd.

EDMONTON.—Communications to the Sec., 142 Bulwer-rd., Edmonton, N.18.

HACKNEY.—Communications to the Sec., 78 Greenwood-rd., E.8. Branch meets Fridays, 7.30, at the Sigdon-rd. Schools, opposite Hackney Downs Stn.

HANLEY.—Branch meets Mondays, Working Men's Club, Glass-st. Communications to Sec., T. Travis, 27, Arthur Street, Cobridge, Staffs.

ISLINGTON.—Branch meets Wednesdays, 8.30, at 144 Seven Sisters-rd., Holloway, N. Communications to W. Baker, 35 Alma-st., Kentish Town, N.W.

MANCHESTER.—Communications to Sec., J. Lloyd 2 Chapel-st., Chester-rd., Hulme, Manchester.

N.W. LONDON.—Branch meets Monday at 7, at 107, Charlotte Street, W.1. Communications to Sec., 17, Mount Pleasant, W.C.1. Discussion after branch business.

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA.—Communications to Sec., J. Bird, 5 Wellington-avenue, Westcliffe-on-Sea.

TOOTING.—Communications to Sec., 3, Lyveden-rd., Tooting, S.W.17. Branch meets Fridays, at Parochial Hall, Church-lane, Tooting, at 8 p.m.

TOTTENHAM.—Sec., F. W. Godfrey, 19, Beechfield-rd., Finsbury Pk., N.4. Branch meets Saturdays 8.30 at Earlsmead Schools, Broad-lane, Tottenham. Discussion after branch business. Public invited.

WALTHAMSTOW.—Communications to Sec., 11 Carlton-rd., Walthamstow, E.17. Branch meets at Workmen's Hall, High-st., every Monday.

WATFORD.—A. Lawson, Sec., 107 Kensington-avenue, Watford.

WEST HAM.—Branch meets Thursdays at 8 p.m. at 167 Romford rd., Stratford. Communications to P. Hallard, 22 Colegrave-rd., Stratford, E.

WOOD GREEN.—Branch meets Fridays at 8.30 at Brook Hall, Brook-rd., Mayes-rd., N.22.

S.P.G.B. PROPAGANDA MEETINGS

LONDON DISTRICT.

Sundays:

Clapham Common, 3 p.m.
Edmonton, Silver Street, 11.30 a.m.
Finsbury Park, 3 p.m.
Stratford, Vicarage-lane, 7.30 p.m.
Tooting Broadway, Garrett-lane, 11.30 a.m.
Tottenham, West Green Corner, 7.30 p.m.
Victoria Park, 3.30 p.m.
Wood Green, Jolly Butcher's-hill, 7.30 p.m.

Mondays:

Highbury Corner, 8 p.m.

Tuesdays:

Tooting, Church-lane, 8 p.m.

Thursdays:

Dalston, Queen's-road, 8.30 p.m.
Wimbledon Broadway, 8 p.m.

Fridays:

Tottenham, Junction Clyde-road and Phillip-lane, 8 p.m.

Saturdays:

Wood Green, Jolly Butcher's-hill, 8 p.m.
Tooting, Undine-street, 8 p.m.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN.

OBJECT.

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY of Great Britain

HOLDS—

That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

That as political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working-class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

The SOCIALIST PARTY of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

Those agreeing with the above principles and desiring enrolment in the Party should apply for membership form to secretary of nearest branch or at Head Office.